

VÖVEM

THE PERFECT PLACE TO MEAT!



Reviewed by Natalie Kern / Photos by Julia Roder

Since deciding to give up meat nine months ago, I've been fairly successful at living a veggie lifestyle and have almost entirely given up my carnivore ways... almost! So it was with much excitement and delight (and a great deal of guilty pleasure) that I accepted an invitation to Nueva Andalucía's celebrated meat restaurant, Vovem, because I knew that I couldn't possibly visit this "paradise for steak lovers" without sampling some of their finest cuts.

Despite having only been open a couple of months, Vovem's reputation for exquisite charcuterie is already the talk of the town, so if I was going to break my strict (ish!) self-imposed diet, then at least I should do it in style!

Vovem is a stylish steakhouse with a modern urban décor and a wonderfully

relaxed and trendy vibe. Dark woods, stainless steel, glass windows, leather chairs and funky lighting, with an open kitchen, oak grill oven and all of its fresh produce on display – it's both a culinary and visual work of art.

The thing that hits you first is the smell! It's out of this world! I'm not quite sure how they do this 'oak grilling' but it smells sensational. It reminds me of something between the Brazilian Churrascarias and Rodizios of my childhood holidays in South and Central America – and the up-and-coming smokehouse restaurants and brasseries in London. My mouth is watering and suddenly I can't seem to remember why I even gave up meat in the first place!

Although the interior is stunning (and smells divine!) we opt for a table outside on the decked terrace as it's a balmy

spring evening and the outside area affords wonderful breezes (and a great opportunity for people watching!)

Our starters arrive - a mesmerising explosion of colours, tastes and aromas, each dish prettier and more exquisitely presented than the next. First, Carpaccio with wild Edible Flowers and Vanilla Ice cream. Yes, you read that right; Meat with Flowers and Ice cream! This dish was not only a treat on the eyes, with pink, purple and lilac flowers scattered about the plate alongside delicate servings of ice cream, but it was also a culinary masterpiece! The salty cured beef was complemented beautifully with the sweet ice cream and some delicately chopped kiwi finished the dish off to perfection.

Next came a Tuna Tartar, served with finely sliced Spring Onion and Guacamole.



Once again, the flavours were a perfect marriage and the texture of the tuna, which simply melted in my mouth, was heavenly.

I was excitedly anticipating a heavy meat dish next, when out came the most delightful plate of fresh squid. This dish looked like 'spring on a plate' with emerald green garden peas and mange-touts drizzled in olive oil along with squid and its ink – it was a perfect melange of fresh sea and garden produce.

And now for the piece de resistance – The Steak - For after all, this is what Vovem's reputation is built upon and I'm eager to find out if the hype is real. From Rib Eyes to Sirloin and Tenderloin cuts, aged from 11 months (Veal steaks) to 48 or 52 months old, the selection of steaks to choose from is endless. For lovers of luxury, the Bodega, 'El Capricho' is considered, according to the New York Times, to be the best meat in the world, then there is the famed beef of Japan; Wagyu, a Japanese national breed of Ox cattle and of course the pure bred black beef – Kobe. Other cuts included the Rack of Veal, Fresian Picanha,



Ox Beef premium Picanha and even the Vovem hamburger.

Our giant Rib-Eye Steak was served rare – just how I like it. Red in the middle and wonderfully charcoaled, almost caramelised on the outside. Served on a slate board and sprinkled with crushed sea salt, the magnificent cut of beef was not cooked to everyone's liking – but alongside the Steak came a piping hot smoking griddle, and those who fancied their meat medium-rare or medium were able to cook their slices of beef to the optimum cuisson.

To say that the meat was delicious is an understatement. It really was sensational and the fatty rind of this particular cut keeps the meat moist and so full of flavour – and I must confess to even devouring some of the crispy fat, which tasted like scrumptious salty Crackling! The meat was served with Pimientos de Padron, the local Baby Green Peppers that had had been cooked on the charcoal in the fat of the Meat, and thinly sliced Potatoes, much like Crisps. We were also offered a choice of many different types of Mustard and

Sauces and a selection of flavoured Sea Salts, which included Lemon, Charcoal and Mixed Herb Salts.

After this veritable feast, I was after a pudding that was light and fruity, without being too heavy or rich – and Vovem's delectable Cheesecake ticked all the boxes. Creamy and fluffy Vanilla Cheese topping on a buttery Biscuit base, served with mixed Red Berries and a Berry Coulis this delightful dessert was extraordinarily presented alongside a giant fluffy cloud – I took one mouthful of the airy white puff – and it dissolved upon my tongue – a wonderfully sweet and grown-up version of Candy Floss! It was perfect!

Now, I'm not saying that I'm renouncing vegetarianism and am becoming a fully fledged carnivore again, but let's just say that if I fancy eating meat again anytime soon... I know where I'll come!

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